



# KWINTIME / SO:SONDAL NEWSLETTER



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A newsletter for the Veterans, their families of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian community.

Skek Tash/Kamduum,

With the creation of the Veterans Representative Office came with the understanding that there was going to be a lot of outreach into the community. This newsletter is just one of those ways in which to reach out and inform you, the Veteran or the family member of a Veteran.

With so many different forms of communicating these days (i.e., email, texting, Social Media) it can be difficult to choose which methods to employ while trying to reach your audience. While this newsletter is but one way of informing others of the availability and creation of programs in the Veterans community, please be on the lookout for other forms of communication about the Veter-

ans Representative office. That is also including visits within the community. I encourage each and every one of you who are reading this first issue of the newsletter to offer ideas and thoughts about its content, even more so how it can be delivered to the community veterans.

With that being said, I still know full well the best and most effective form of communicating still remains a sit down, face to face visit. Of which I am always willing to meet with you and discuss the concerns, questions and solutions to what may be on the forefront of your mind when it comes to you as a Veteran or the Family member of a Veteran

Pacer Reina



**Pacer Reina, Veterans Representative for the SRPMIC**

**Mr. Reina served in the United States Army , with the 82nd Airborne Division as signed to the 2/505 Parachute Infantry Regiment. During his time in service his unit was attached to the Multi-National Forces and Observers Task force in the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt.**

**Later Mr. Reina served alongside other coalition forces during Operation Desert Shield/Storm.**

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## Charity Reaches Across US to Support Military and Veterans

**Veteran Tickets Foundation AKA Vet Tix** is a nationally recognized 501c3 Veterans Support Organization whose mission is to "give something to those who gave." The Foundation teams up with major sports teams, leagues, promoters, organizations, venues and everyday event ticket holders to provide free (and discounted tickets) to the more than 26 million active Military, Veterans and their families in the United States. We are headquartered out of Phoenix Arizona and started in 2008.

**WHAT WE DO** - We support our Active Duty Military, Veterans and their Families with entertainment, lasting memories and reintegration opportunities by providing free event tickets to sporting events, concerts, and family activities.

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE? Go to:** <http://www.vettix.org/signup.php>

**Veteran Tickets Foundation is listed on the Department of Defense (DoD) website [www.OurMilitary.mil](http://www.OurMilitary.mil) , see link <http://www.ourmilitary.mil/comprehensive-list-of-community-support-groups>**

**For more information contact Brandi Shannon, President of Community Relations, Veteran Tickets Foundation, 623-694-5357 and website at [www.VetTix.org](http://www.VetTix.org).**

## Unemployed Veterans Requesting Retraining Program to Enhance Job Skills

### *Strong Pace of Applications Puts VA on Course to Meet its VRAP Goals*

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs has approved more than 36,000 applications for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), a new training and education program for unemployed Veterans to upgrade their skills for in-demand jobs.

“The tremendous response illustrates how important this program is in providing Veterans the opportunity to find employment in a high-demand field,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

At the current approval rate, VA expects to fill all 45,000 available slots for the fiscal year 2012 phase of the program before the Sept. 30 deadline, and will continue processing new applications for the 54,000 slots available in fiscal year 2013.

The program, a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which was passed by Congress and signed by the President in November 2011, is managed by VA and the Department of Labor (DOL) and allows qualifying Veterans to receive up to 12 months of education assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

The goal of VRAP is to train a total of 99,000 Veterans over the next two years in more than 200 job skills that DOL has determined are the most sought-after by employers.

To be eligible for the program, a Veteran must:

- Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application, and not dishonorably discharged;
- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment;
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job-training program within the last 180 days; and
- Not receive VA compensation at the 100% rate due to individual unemployability (IU).

## Confidential Help For Veterans and Their Families



**“I AM A VETERAN.**  
Calling the confidential Veterans  
Crisis Line can help. I know.”

Job Skills....

Veterans who have been approved for VRAP are encouraged to enroll as soon as possible to start training full-time in a VA-approved program of study offered by a community college or technical school. The program of study must lead to an associate degree, non-college degree, or certificate for a [high-demand occupation](#) as defined by DOL.

Applicants approved for the 2013 phase should enroll full-time in an approved program and start training by April 2013 in order to take full advantage of this benefit before its termination March 31, 2014.

“I’m thrilled that the response to the program has been so strong,” said VA Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “But we need to keep getting the word out to maintain the momentum.”

VA Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity Curtis Coy acknowledged the program applies to a small segment of the Veteran population that may not have regular interaction with VA or stay informed about Veterans’ benefits and opportunities.

“We ask anyone who knows an unemployed Veteran to tell them about VRAP,” said Coy. “We are counting on the continued help of Veterans Service Organizations and the Department of Labor, as well as the American public, to reach as many eligible Veterans as possible.”

Potential applicants can learn more about VRAP and apply online at [www.benefits.va.gov/VOW](http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW), or call VA toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. Information about the Department of Labor’s programs for Veterans is available at [www.dol.gov/vets](http://www.dol.gov/vets). Veterans can also visit the nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation, listed at [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org), for in-person assistance.

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Are you a Veteran looking to own your own business? As a part of this newsletter one of the many organizations devoted to helping Veteran owned business will be highlighted. Follow the links to the website, call the listed number for information and learn how this organization can get you moving forward to starting your business.



Since its founding on July 30, 1953, the U.S. Small Business Administration has delivered millions of loans, loan guarantees, contracts, counseling sessions and other forms of assistance to small businesses. SBA provides assistances primarily through its four programmatic functions:

- Access to Capital (Business Financing)
- Entrepreneurial Development (Education, Information, Technical Assistance & Training)
- Government Contracting (Federal Procurement)
- Advocacy (Voice for Small Business)

**Further information about the U.S. Small business Administration;**

**SBA Office of Veterans Business Development**  
**<http://www.sba.gov/about-offices-content/1/2985>**

**SBA, Arizona District Office, call (602) 745-7200 , e-mail: [Arizona@sba.gov](mailto:Arizona@sba.gov)**

## 'A Sign of Good Faith'

American Indian veterans in the Southwest want a more permanent VA presence.

By Philip M. Callaghan - August 1, 2012

Reprinted with permission of the American Legion Magazine, August 2012 issue

Roy Yazzie, an American Indian, fought in the Vietnam War as a Marine. He doesn't hear well, battles diabetes and struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder. On far too many nights, he just can't go to sleep.

Through VA, he sees a social worker once a month and a psychiatrist every two months. He also takes medication daily.

Yazzie says the health care itself is good. However, the distance and staffing levels could be improved. "Sometimes it takes you quite a while to see someone, even if you've already made an appointment," he said during a visit to the Chinle Vet Center in northeastern Arizona on the Navajo reservation.

The biggest problem is distance: the Navajo Nation covers more than 27,000 square miles, across some of the most sparsely populated land in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. Patients often travel hundreds of miles to get VA health care, and providers often travel hundreds of miles to give it. From his home in Farmington, N.M., Yazzie has to drive to the VA medical center in Albuquerque, about 180 miles away. "I would like more VA health care in Farmington," he says. "When you're stressed out, sometimes you don't want to travel very far. I don't feel like driving."

Emmarie Sheppard, an Army veteran who drives Chinle's mobile veterans center, agrees that transportation is a serious barrier to local veterans receiving treatment.

"They say that Chinle is the central location of the Navajo Nation (in Arizona)," she says. "It's centralized, yes, but (VA) doesn't take into consideration that, depending on where you're coming from, people have to drive on 70 miles of dirt road. I wouldn't come here for services. It's just too much of a hassle."

On the contrary, VA is well aware of transportation issues in rural settings. Rod Sepulveda, the Northern Arizona VA Health Care System's rural health program coordinator, is responsible for assessing the needs of communities and helping develop solutions.

"For example, we don't want anyone driving more than an hour to get VA health care," he says. As a result, VA clinics are planned for Chinle, Flagstaff and other Arizona locations in the Navajo Nation.

VA tries to place facilities so that most patients have to travel no more than 60 miles, Sepulveda says, "but because of the road conditions, we're planning them for 60 miles or less. We're trying to locate clinics to make them more accessible to our vets – not just Native Americans, but all veterans. That's the key thing we have to emphasize. When we're out here as VA, we're looking at every single veteran. We can't treat different people different ways."

VA signed memoranda of understanding with the Indian Health Service in 2003 and 2010, pledging to find more effective ways to improve the delivery of health care to Indian reservations.

In Sepulveda's own region, VA's Office of Rural Health (ORH) has funded several health-care initiatives, including a mobile medical unit. "(ORH) actually paid for that entire unit," he says.

"Just about everything we've asked for, we've actually gotten."

Vet Centers are another matter. VA doesn't own or maintain them, but provides personnel to staff them. Ruthie Hunter is a VA social worker who has worked with the Navajo tribe for more than 20 years. She operates out of the Chinle Vet Center, where the roof leaks badly.

"It's important to support providers, so they can do what they need to do," Hunter says. "To get easy access to health care, you need a place with some stability."

Hunter educates communities on suicide prevention, teaching local people what they can do to help or intervene. “At the end, I always invite the people in the audience to tell us about some veterans who may be way out there, who are having problems accessing services, that I need to know about so that I can go out there to see them. We’re trying to do the outreach.”

VA is also reaching out to rural veterans with Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC), which delivers a variety of medical services to the homes of veterans whose health issues are not effectively treated by routine, clinic-based care. The HBPC program has found success in the Pueblo Nation. Marvin Trujillo is the tribal veterans service officer for the Pueblo of Laguna, about 45 miles west of Albuquerque. He works with VA medical offices to get HBPC for Pueblo veterans, calling it “awesome care for the veterans, especially in the rural communities, because you have a visiting nurse, a doctor, specialists who come out to the veteran. They do a screening process for the veteran and for the residence,” and make disabled veterans’ homes more accessible with ramps and other modifications.

Trujillo, a Navy and Marine Corps veteran, says VA deserves praise for the HBPC program. “They do the blood testing, go back to Albuquerque and get the results the same day. If a veteran needs medication, they can send it overnight to them. The veterans can use telemedicine right in their homes and send their vital signs via computer or phone lines.”

While improvements are under way in VA rural health care on the reservations, most are geared toward male Navajo and Pueblo patients. When it comes to women’s health care, a different story is told. Cassandra Morgan is a Marine Corps veteran who has been working with Navajo veterans since 1996, helping them file disability claims and sometimes translating for them at claims hearings. She says that VA health care for female veterans in the rural setting “is almost nonexistent. It’s difficult because education is lacking at all levels.”

The only adequate health care Morgan says she’s received was at the VA clinic in Albuquerque, 140 miles away from her home in Gallup, N.M. At her local community-based outpatient clinic, “exams are kind of uncomfortable because we’ve only had male doctors there.” Recently, the clinic got a female physician’s assistant.

“Doctors need sensitivity training for female patients,” Morgan says. “Our health problems are from trauma in the military, not because we are women.”

Distance has been another obstacle for Morgan in getting the health care she needs. Two years ago, she enrolled in a 12-week women’s PTSD clinic at the VA medical center in Albuquerque, two and a half hours away. “I tried it for six weeks, and then the weather got bad,” she says.

“I had to stop the program.”

Even so, Morgan hasn’t stopped reaching out to veterans. Neither have dozens of other specialists in tribal communities, such as Van Poyer at the Chinle Vet Center, who believes the best way to improve rural health care is to build more permanent facilities and staff them with permanent VA employees.

“They need to build a VA clinic right here on the reservation, so that our veterans don’t have to travel so far – so there’s actual Native American staff they would feel comfortable talking to and coming to for help,” he says.

Such an investment would be “a sign of good faith,” Morgan says. “The mobile thing doesn’t help. We have too many things that don’t stay. And the vets out here feel used – if not by the politicians, then by organizations who want our numbers. If you could even have a small building with two or three people that says ‘Veterans Administration,’ you’re going to have that place packed.”

*Philip M. Callaghan is director of media marketing for The American Legion.*



## 2nd Annual Dinner In Honor of Arizona Vietnam Veterans



### To Arizona Vietnam Veterans, families & friends

The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and the Arizona Military Museum in conjunction with the Department of Defense 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War is proud to host the 2nd Annual *DINNER IN HONOR OF ARIZONA VIETNAM VETERANS* at *Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino in Chandler, Arizona on October 20, 2012*. We are honored to have as Special Guest Speaker, Lieutenant General Claude M. Kicklighter, USA (Ret.), Director of the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War project.

AS WE DID LAST YEAR, WE PRESENT THIS EVENT AND DINNER TO HONOR THE SERVICE OF ARIZONA'S VI-ETNAM VETERANS. Our intent is that this event be part of the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War activities whose first stated objective is:

*To thank and honor veterans who served in the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.*

The affair will be a special experience including a Vietnamese Color Guard, a wonderful dinner, good music, some short speeches, some videos, TAPS, and a special presentation to Vietnam veterans. It is open to those who desire to honor Vietnam veterans. Business attire/casual or Army Class A or service equivalent is appropriate. We look forward to seeing many Vietnam veterans, their families and friends.

The dinner cost is \$40.00 per person. Unfortunately, the hotel can only accommodate 400 attendees, so we need your RSVP registration and check ASAP to confirm your attendance at this wonderful experience. Wild Horse Pass Hotel rooms are set aside for your convenience at only \$99.00 per night, particularly if you're travelling from outside the Phoenix area. Just call the hotel for room reservations at 1-800-946-4452. For other questions call 520-868-6777.

### Statement from Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki

#### Executive Order to Improve Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families

Washington, D.C., August 31, 2012

President Obama continues to demonstrate that his commitment to Veterans is genuine, it runs deep, and it is unwavering. I applaud the President's strong and decisive leadership in advocating for America's Veterans. The President's historic initiatives and budgetary support will have a positive impact on the lives of Veterans and their families for generations to come.

History shows that the costs of war will continue to grow for a decade or more after the wars have ended. The mental health and well-being of our brave men and women who have served the Nation is the highest priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

VA will work closely with our federal partners to implement the executive order immediately, and continue to expand access to the high-quality mental health care services our Veterans have earned and deserve.

## Upcoming events

### Veterans Logo Design Contest

Design a new logo for the Veterans Representative Office and you could win an amazing prize.

The Veterans Representative Office invites Community members of all ages and SRPMIC employees to design a new logo that will be used in helping to identify the Veterans Representative Office. We are looking for a logo that will capture both the spirit of the SRPMIC Warrior/Veteran as well as the Community's historic culture of its warriors — a design that will invite everyone to honor past, present and future Veterans.

More information will come regarding rules, category's and prizes. Till then if you have an idea please feel free to start designing.

### Veterans Town Hall Meetings

The Veterans Representative Office will soon be holding Veterans Town Hall Meetings regarding various topics which are of value to Veterans and their families. Should you as a Veteran or family member of a Veteran have a topic that you would like to see as a part of these town hall meetings feel free to contact the Veterans Representative Office.



## How Can eBenefits Assist Me?

You can apply for Compensation, Pension, Education, Burial and Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Benefits online through the Veterans Online Application (VONAPP).

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**VISIT THE SRPMIC VETERANS AFFAIRS WEBSITE:**

<http://www.srpmic-nsn.gov/community/veterans/>